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Message Text

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ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SY-05 USSS-00 PM-03

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /067 W
---------- 000274
O P 101630Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5246
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD UNN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 8793

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINS, LE, PLO
SUBJECT: THE MORGAN ABDUCTION-IRONIC GOAD TO INTRA-PALESTINIAN CONFRONTATION

REF: BEIRUT 8716 (NOTAL)

1. COMMUNIQUE ISSUED EVENING JULY 9 IN NAME OF COMMAND OF PALESTINAIN REVOLUTION (REFTEL) AND REJOINDER SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED BY "PALESTINIAN FRONT OF FORCES REJECTING SUR-RENDERIST SOLUTIONS" APPEAR TO HAVE PLACED CONTENDING TRENDS WITHIN PLO ON COLLISSION COURSE. EVEN MOST CYNICAL LOCAL CONFIDENTIAL

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OBSERVERS, WHO HAVE HERETOFORE HARBORED SUSPICIONS THAT

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VARIOUS ELEMENTS AMONG PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN PLAYING
OUT COMPLICATED CHARADE ON MORGAN CASE, NOW PREPARED
TO CONCEDE THAT BREACH IS GENUINE AND SERIOUS. IT IS
SOMEWHAT IRONIC THAT 'ARAFAT AND PLO "MODERATES," WHO
HAVE IN THE PAST SHOWN THEMSELVES EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO
CRACK DOWN ON PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS NOT RPT NOT RESPONSIVE
TO PLO DIRECTION AND DISCIPLINE, APPEAR TO HAVE DRAWN THE
LINE OVER MORGAN KIDNAPPING AND SIMILAR CRIMES OF RECENT
VINTAGE.

2. WAFA COMMUNIQUE JULY 9 READS LIKE BILL OF INDICTMENT AND
IS HIGHLY UNUSUAL DOCUMENT WHICH PROMISES RETRIBUTION TO MEM-
BERS OF POPULAR STRUGGLE FRONT (PSF) AND PFLP--GENERAL COM-
MAND (AHMED JIBRIL). WE KNOW RESPONSIBLE LEADERS OF FATAH
AND SA'IQA WERE AWARE OF MORGAN'S DISAPPEARANCE AT LEAST AS
EARLY AS TUESDAY, JULY 1 AND PROBABLY BEFORE THAT DATE AND HAD
BEGUN LOW-LEVEL INQUIRIES TO ASCERTAIN HIS WHEREABOUTS. WE
BELIEVE IT HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT SERIES OF STEPS AND MEETINGS OUT-
LINED IN WAFA COMMUNIQUE (PARAS 1-6 OF REFTEL) DES-
CRIBE WITH REASONABLE DEGREE OF ACCURACY FORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF
PLO INQUIRY. ASSIGNMENTS OF INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND
POSTPONEMENTS OF REPORTS DETAILED IN DOCUMENT COINCIDE WITH
AND PROBABLY EXPLAIN SERIES OF OPTIMISTIC (BUT UNFULFILLED) RE-
PORTS REGARDING MORGAN'S IMMINENT RELEASE THAT EMBASSY
RECEIVED ALMOST DAILY FROM GOL SECURITY SERVICES BEGINNING
JULY 6. IT NOW APPEARS LIKELY THAT PLO, LIKE GOL, REALLY
DID EXPECT MORGAN'S SAFE RETURN ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

3. ONCE 'ARAFAT AND PLO "MODERATE" LEADERSHIP DE-
CIDED TO ACCEPT TASK OF SECURING SAFE RELEASE OF MORGAN,
THEIR PREESTIGE AND CLAIMS TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS
IN LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE WERE ENGAGED VIS-A-VIS GOL
(AND THROUGH GOL THE USG AS WELL) AND REGIONAL AND IN-
TERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION. PLO'S INABILITY, THEREFORE, TO
PRODUCE MORGAN BECAME INCREASING SOURCE OF EMBARRASS-
MENT, AND FRUSTRATION OVER PERSISTENT INTRACTABILITY OF HIS
CAPTORS UNDOUBTEDLY GALVANIZED DETERMINATION TO TAKE
UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF "NAMING NAMES." AS WE HAVE RE-
PORTED ELSWHERE, PLO ATTITUDE TOWARD ABDUCTORS UNDERWENT
PALPABLE "HARDENING" IN PERIOD BETWEEN 1500 AND 1700 LOCAL
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ON JULY 9, WHEN IT EVIDENTLY BECAME CLEAR TO 'ARAFAT (AND
ABU IYAD, WHO WE ARE RELIABLY INFORMED WAS CLOSELY IN-
VOLVED IN DELIBERATIONS) THAT METHODS OF QUIET PRESSURE AND
PERSSUASION WOULD NOT SPRING MORGAN PRIOR TO 2100 LOCAL DEAD-
LINE SET BY "REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ACTION ORGANIZATION."
ABU IYAD TELEPHONED COL KAMAL DIB, LEBANESE ARMY G-2
LIAISON OFFICER WITH PLO, AT APPROXIMATELY 1820 LOCAL TO
ALERT HIM TO FORTHCOMING COMMUNIQUE. ABU IYAD TOLD COL DIB

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THAT PLO HOPED COMMUNIQUE WOULD TIGHTEN SCREWS ON ABDUCTORS ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM GIVE UP COL MORGAN. INTERESTINGLY, PLO SOUGHT AND APPARENTLY OBTAINED ENDORSEMENT OF "LEBANESE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT" (OR AT LEAST SOME PORTIONS OF LEBANESE LEFT) FOR WAFA COMMUNIQUE, DESPITE 'ARAFAT'S PUBLIC DISASSOCIATION OF PLO FROM LEBANESE INTERNAL POLITICS ON JUNE 24 (BEIRUT 8208). LEBANESE SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT AT LEAST OUTLINE OF COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN CIRCULATING AMONG PALESTINIAN GROUPS FOR DAY OR TWO PRIOR TO PUBLICATION. IF TRUE (AND WE CANNOT CONFIRM), WOULD SEEM THAT VIRTUAL DECLARATION OF WAR (WHICH COMMUNIQUE REPRESENTS) WAS HELD OVER HEAD OF SUSPECTED ABDUCTORS TO NO RPT NO AVAIL. THIS WOULD ALSO EXPLAIN WHY "REJECTION FRONT" WAS ABLE TO RESPOND WITH COUNTER-COMMUNIQUE SO QUICKLY LAST NIGHT. BUT, IT SEEMS LIKELY, IF COMMUNIQUE HAS BEEN AROUND FOR SEVERAL DAYS, THAT DECISION TO PUBLISH IS WELL-CONSIDERED MOVE, AND PLO LEADERSHIP PREPARED TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ACTION AGAINST - REJECTIONISTS."

4. IN REVIEWING COMMUNIQUE, TWO FACTORS STRIKE US IMMEDIATELY. FIRST, PLO COMMAND DID NOT RPT NOT IMPLICATE PFLP (GEORGE HABASH), WHICH IS 'ARAFAT'S MAJOR CHALLENGER AND LEADER OF "REJECTION FRONT" TO WHICH BOTH PSF AND PFLP-GC ADHERE. PREVIOUS INDICATIONS HAVE LED TO CONCLUSION THAT PFLP WAS AS SOME POINT INVOLVED WITH MORGAN, AND WE CERTAINLY DOUBT, IN ANY CASE, THAT PFLP HAS BEEN UNAWARE OF INCIDENT AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS. WE NOTE (PARA 8, REFTEL) THAT TAYSIR QUB'AH (PFLP NOTABLE WHO HAS OCCASIONALLY BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO HABASH) WAS TAPPED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARRANGING MORGAN'S RELEASE. IN MAKING THIS ASSIGNMENT, PLO SHOWED IT BELIEVED EITHER THAT PFLP WAS INVOLVED (IF ONLY AS ACCESSORY) OR THAT PFLP WAS SUITABLE CHANNEL FOR OBTAINING RELEASE. NEVERTHELESS, FAILURE OF COMMUNIQUE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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INDICT PFLP PROBABLY REFLECTS 'ARAFAT'S DESIRE TO LIMIT INTERNECINE CONFRONTATION THAT MIGHT FLOW FROM PUBLICATION OF DOCUMENT. IT IS HIGHLY DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, THAT PFLP WOULD BE WILLING TO STAND ASIDE WHILE PLO ATTACKED ITS "REJECTIONIST" ALLIES. APPARENT SUBSCRIPTION OF PFLP TO "REJECTION FRONT" REJOINDER (SEE BELOW) UNDERSCORES THIS POINT.

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NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07

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O P 101630Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5247
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD UNN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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5. SECONDLY, PLO COMMUNIQUE FALLS SHORT OF UNALTERABLE COMMITMENT TO ACTION AGAINST PERPETRATORS OF ABDUCTION. "COMMAND OF THE REVOLUTION," COMMUNIQUE CONCLUDES, "HOPES THAT QUARTERS CONCERNED WILL TURN ALL THOSE PERSONS BEING SOUGHT OVER TO IT SO AS TO PUT A RADICAL END TO THIS ANARCHIC SABOTAGE AND SO AS NOT TO OBLIGE IT TO PUT HANDS ON THESE ELEMENTS THROUGH METHODS WHICH IT DEEMS PROPER." THREAT OF ACTION IS CLEAR, BUT WAY OUT OF BUILDING CONFRONTATION IS LEFT OPEN--RELEASE OF COL MORGAN AND OTHER HOSTAGES. IT IS DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO ENVISAGE AT THIS TIME HOW PLO COMMAND CAN FAIL TO CARRY THROUGH WITH ITS THREAT IN FACE OF CONTINUING DEFIANCE BY KIDNAPPERS WITHOUT SUFFERING SERIOUS LOSS OF FACE AND CREDIBILITY. TO LEND
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WEIGHT TO ITS WARNING, PLO ANNOUNCED THROUGH WAFA JULY 10 THAT MOHAMMED SALIM AL-JALLAD, DESCRIBED AS A FEDAYEEN, WAS SENTENCED BY SPECIAL MILITARY TRBUNAL AND EXECUTED FOR "CRIMES AGAINST

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THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION."

6. HOURS AFTER PUBLICATION OF COMMAND COMMUNIQUE, "REJECTIONIST" COMMUNIQUE OF SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS PARENTAGE WAS RELEASED TO PRESS. SIGNIFICANTLY, SECOND DOCUMENT DOES NOT RPT NOT REFUTE DIRECTLY CHARGES MADE BY PLO COMMAND. INVEIGHING AGAINST "RIGHTIST" AND "RACTIONARY" ELEMENTS (PRESUMABLY PLO "MODERATES"), DOCUMENT DEVOTES ONLY ONE PARAGRAPH TO MORGAN CASE. "USING CASE OF AMERICAN COL MORGAN, WHO CAME TO LEBANON ON NON-TOURISTIC MISSION, AS WAY TO ATTACK AND DEFAME REJECTIONIST FORCES," COMMUNIQUE STATES, "MERELY SERVES IMPERIALISM AND REACTION AND THEIR ALLIES. POSITION OF PLO COMMAND ON HIS DISAPPEARANCE IS NOT RPT NOT JUST STRANGE; IT ALSO INDICATES CLASS NATURE OF THIS COMMAND AND OF ITS STANDS." WE COMMEND TO ATTENTION OF DEPARTMENT SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGE AND CHARACTER OF CRITICISM OF PLO "MODERATES" IN THIS DOCUMENT TO THOSE CONTAINED IN

MOST RECENT COMMUNICATION RE MORGAN (SEPTELS) WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM SELF-PROCLAIMED REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ACTION ORGANIZATION.

7. "REJECTIONIST" COMMUNIQUE IS INTERPRETED BY PRESS HERE AS BEARING ENDORSEMENT OF FOLLOWING GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS: POPULAR STRUGGLE FRONT, PFLP-GC, PFLP, ARAB LIBERATION FRONT, PARTI POPULAIRE SYRIEN (PPS), "OCTOBER 24 MOVEMENT" (FAROUK MUGADDAM), UNION OF WORKING PEOPLE'S FORCES (NASSERIST), AND ARAB SOCIALIST ACTION PARTY (?). IN ACTUAL FACT, COMMUNIQUE MERELY TAKES NOTE OF "FACT" LATTER FOUR LEBANESE GROUPS WERE ALLEGEDLY NOT RPT NOT PRESENT AT MEETING WHICH DECIDED TO PUBLISH WAFA COMMUNIQUE. SO FAR AS WE AWARE, HOWEVER, NO RPT NO DENIAL OF SUPPORT FOR "REJECTIONIST" STATEMENT HAS YET BEEN ISSUED BY ANY OF THESE GROUPS.

8. SEEMS CLEAR AT THIS STAGE THAT BOTH 'ARAFAT AND "REJECTIONISTS" HAVE PLACED THEMSELVES ON COLLISION COURSE. WE BELIEVE 'ARAFAT IS WELL AWARE OF CHALLENGE AND DANGER TO HIS LEADERSHIP WHICH PALESTINIANS OF LEFT (AND THEIR LEBANESE ALLIES) HAVE BEEN MOUNTING RECENTLY. BRIG. MUSA KANAAN TOLD EMBOFF JULY 5
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THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH 'ARAFAT JUNE 25 WHEN FORMER WAS STILL DEPUTY PRIMIN IN LEBANESE CARE-TAKER CABINET. 'ARAFAT REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED REAL AWARENESS OF THIS PROBLEM AND STATED AT THAT TIME THAT HE ('ARAFAT) WOULD MOVE TO ELIMINATE "REJECTIONISTS" WHEN HE (AL ASSURED LEBANESE ARMY HAD NO RPT NO INTENTION OF ATTACKING HIM (I.E., PLO) AND (B) PLO LEADERSHIP HAD SOME KIND OF CONTACT WITH AMERICANS. IN MORGAN CASE, 'ARAFAT FINDS HIMSELF ALLIED WITH GOL AUTHORITIES AND MAY BE CONVINCED, FOR MOMENT AT LEAST, HE HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM LEBANESE ARMY. INDEED, HE IS PROBABLY WORRIED THAT ABDUCTION

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WITH INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION AND IMPLICATIONS WITHIN
LEBANON CONSTITUTES REAL THREAT TO HIS POSITION AND TO SECURITY
OF PLO IN LEBANON IF NOT BROUGHT TO HAPPY CONCLUSION. HE
MAY ALSO HAVE SOME HOPE THAT RESPONSIBLE ACTION ON HIS PART
IN PRESENT CASE AND WITHIN LEBANON GENERALLY MAY GO FAR TOWARD
EARNING USG APPRECIATION.

9. SEVERAL WELL-INFORMED OBSERVERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE
TALKED JULY 10 BELIEVE THAT, WITH EXCHANGE OF COMMUNIQUES,
'ARAFAT HAS THROWN DOWN GAUNTLET AND HABASH AND COMPANY
HAVE PICKED IT UP. THIS CERTAINLY SEEMS TO BE THE CASE, BUT
PALESTINIANS OF ALL POLITICAL STRIPES HAVE DEMONSTRATED IN
PAST REMARKABLE ABILITY TO SLIDE OUT OF APPARENTLY IRREVOCABLE
CONFRONTATION SITUATIONS. WE SHOULD CERTAINLY KNOW MORE ABOUT
SITUATION IN NEXT DAY OR TWO. MANY PERSONS BELIEVE THAT PLO
ELEMENTS (PRIMARILY FATAH AND SA'IQA) WILL NOW MOVE MILITARILY
AGINST PSF AND ALF INSTALLATIONS WITHIN REFUGEE CAMPS IN EFFORT
TO FIND MORGAN. WE HAVE HAD REPORTS AFTERNOON JULY 10
OF FIRING HEARD IN SABRA/SHATILA CAMP BUT HESITATE TO DRAW ANY
CONCLUSIONS ON BASIS THIS FRAGMENTARY EVIDENCE. FRATERNAL
PALESTINIAN CONFLICTS WOULD, OF COURSE, HARDLY BE CONFINED
ENTIRELY TO CAMPS AND, GIVEN APPARENT EXISTENCE OF LEBANESE
CONFEDERATES FOR BOTH PLO COMMAND AND "REJECTONISTS,"
SUCH EVENTUALITY HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR STILL-FRAGILE
STATE OF PUBLIC SECURITY IN BEIRUT. FURTHERMORE, WE SHOULD
CALL ATTENTION TO FACT THAT, WHILE PLO PRESSURE ON MORGAN'S
KIDNAPPERS MAY BE HELPFUL, IT COULD ALSO PUSH THOSE HOLDING
HIM TO EXTREME ACTION. INTER-PALESTINIAN SHOOT-OUTS, OF COURSE,
WOULD BE FURTHER SOURCE OF DANGER TO MORGAN'S WELL-BEING,
THE CLOSER THEY COME TO HIS PLACE OF DETENTION.
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